

INSIDE

**Commander's
Corner**

This week the commander of 1st Special Forces Group discusses the group's role in the Global War on Terrorism and Army transformation

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**Fort Lewis unit
runs 'mall'**

Soldiers from 296th BSB take over operation with Iraqi nationals to serve troops at base.

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**Engineers ready
for return trip**

Soldiers from 555th Engineer Group make final plans for return home.

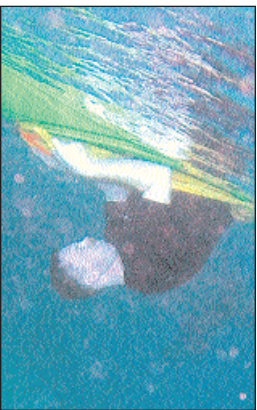
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**Yelm on the
prairie**

One of Fort Lewis' community partners, Yelm has everything from state-of-the-art cine-plex to restful parks.

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**Doing the right
kayak roll**

Learning how to kayak is one of the classes offered by Northwest Adventure Center.

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NOTICES

**2004 Women's
Conference**

The conference will be held today and Saturday at Stone Education Center. A \$15 fee includes two days of seminars, lunch and a tote bag filled with information and promotional items. Cost for Saturday only is \$12. Conference sweatshirts will be available for an additional \$5. For more information, call 912-1906 or 964-0796 or e-mail womensconference@aol.com.

Soldiers help Iraqis rebuild

Reopening
of police
station
highlights
503th MP
progress

Task Force Olympia Public Affairs

MOSUL, Iraq — Security concerns remained high as local Iraqi police officers and Coalition officials attended a ribbon cutting ceremony March 3 at the Althaqafa Police Station, celebrating the station's reconstruction after a deadly suicide bombing nearly five weeks ago. The Jan. 31 explosion occurred when a vehicle-borne

improvised explosive device detonated outside the station, killing 10 Iraqi police officers, some of which were waiting in line to receive their paychecks. Following the attack on the police station, it became the responsibility of the 503rd Military Police Battalion to complete the statement of work, bid the contract for the construction and provide oversight during building.

The 503rd Military Police Battalion is under the operational control of Task Force Olympia in northern Iraq. "Our work here shows a continued commitment of the Coalition to help rebuild Iraq so they may become more self-sufficient," said Lt. Col. Jerry Stevenson, commander 503rd MP Bn.

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Spc. Aaron Ritter

Mosul Chief of Police Mohamad Barhawee and Col. Michael Rounds cut the ceremonial ribbon.

"We're here to show we're behind our country..."

Brig. Gen. Michael A. Dunn



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Gary Ogilvie

Sgt. Russell Smith, 1st Corps Command Honor Guard affixes battle streamers to the Army flag while Spc James Marrs III steadies the flag. The past, present and future members of the armed forces came together at the 2004 Massing of the Colors ceremony at Soldiers' Field House.



Sgt. Doug Hamel, 56th Army Band, plays to the crowd during the Massing of the Colors. The ceremony has taken place annually for 20 consecutive years.

Past, present merge into colorful display

Ceremony brings Soldiers together in show of patriotism

Spc. Steven J. Schneider
1st Corps Public Affairs

The past, present and future of the armed forces came together in a show of patriotism Sunday at the 2004 Massing of the Colors ceremony at Soldiers' Field House. This year's ceremony had flags from more than 100 units and organizations and was the first to include an active color guard from Army, Marines, Coast Guard, Navy and Air Force. "The Massing of the Colors is showing patriotism," said Robert G. Mitchell, retired Navy. "It's for the young people, so they can see what it's like to be a patriot. This brings it all together. The younger people get to see that the older people are still behind them."

Some of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps teenagers agreed

there is a lot to learn from each other. "It's really cool to know the older generation is still around," said Kevin Glidden, JROTC, Lincoln High School, Tacoma. His classmate concurred. "Everybody can learn something from each other," said Joseph Crouch. "From the older Soldiers we can learn and see what we can improve on, and we're the future of our nation's armed forces. It represents the growth of our nation." Master Sgt. Don Alexander, 1st Corps, said he enjoys just hearing the old stories. "It's a good showing of patriotism, and it's nice to come out here and see the men who have served in wars share their stories," Alexander said. "It helps build a sense of pride in serving your nation."

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Youth worker was kid at heart

Staff, children mourn
loss of dedicated friend

By Jason Kaye
Northwest Guardian

The reader board outside the North Fort Youth Center reads, "Goodbye Walter. Our good friend Walter has left us. Keep him in your prayers and may the good Lord welcome him."

It's a farewell from friends who knew him as someone always willing to help others.

Walter Lee Weatherspoon II, a youth program assistant, passed away March 6 just 12 days shy of his 25th birthday.

He worked at Fort Lewis for more than 5 years, and his loss has been deeply felt by the children and employees at the North Fort Youth Center.

Mr. Walter, or Butch as he was sometimes referred to, always tried to keep things positive, find things for the kids to do and make sure no one ever felt left out.

"Deep in his heart he loved it here. He loved the kids. This was his place of freedom where he could hang out and be a big kid himself," said John Kuhmer a friend and fellow employee.

"He wanted to make sure all the kids here had somebody to talk to and look up to," Kuhmer said.

Weatherspoon was reliable as well and made it a point to be at the youth center as often as possible.

"He was one of the few people here six days a week. We're open six days and he was here six days. Everyday at 2 o'clock Walter was walking in this door," said Katrina Clacks, his team leader.

"He was genuinely a nice, nice person," Clacks said.

"I don't think anyone had a bad thing to say about him and we have benefited from knowing him," she added.

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Weatherspoon

Local reporter returns after 4-month stint covering war in Iraq

Objective, timely reports
prove value of 'embeds'

By Sgt. Fred Minnick
Task Force Olympia Public Affairs

For the first time in the history of the Army, the Department of Defense opened the frontlines of combat to print and broadcast journalists from across the world. Described as being "embedded" by those familiar with the program, journalists, historically relegated to briefing rooms or post-incident interviews in a military operations center, are now living, moving, eating and sleeping alongside Soldiers in combat.

For one Tacoma reporter, being embedded with military units during the combat and post-combat

phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom, provided him with unprecedented insight into the lives, decisions and challenges facing Soldiers every minute of every day.

For eight months out of the past year, The News Tribune's Mike Gilbert wore protective body armor and a Kevlar helmet as he experienced the life of an embedded reporter on two separate missions. And on Monday, the Ft. Lewis-based Soldiers with whom Gilbert traveled for the past four months bid him farewell as he prepared to return home.

Gilbert's objective coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom began in March of 2003 when he embedded with the 62nd Medical Brigade. He returned home to his wife and three children in June, volunteering to return to Iraq in November 2003. On his second tour in Iraq, he

joined up with 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) as it moved north from Kuwait, to the outskirts of Samarra, and finally settled its headquarters in Mosul, Iraq. It is this second tour he finished this week.

"Mike is definitely not your average reporter," said Lt. Col. Joseph Piek, public affairs officer for Task Force Olympia, who works with all journalists in the Mosul area. "He could have just stayed in Iraq for a month or two and gone home, but he didn't. He elected to stay for four months during the start of the war and then volunteered to return."

During these embeds, Gilbert operated as a part of his assigned unit, observing actual combat operations. He rode alongside Soldiers in convoys and walked with them on patrols.



139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Reporter Mike Gilbert stands near one of Saddam's former palaces.

"He never had a problem with getting dirty and never asked for special privileges," said Capt. Vinny

Bellisario, Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander for the Stryker Brigade. "He really took a personal interest in his stories and it showed. He wrote about everything from personal Soldier stories to the Army's mail system to actual combat situations."

Gilbert wrote 75 articles about the soldiers of the Stryker Brigade during his second tour, most of which appeared on the front page of the *News Tribune*. When the stories were posted on *Tribnet.com*, they were consistently in the top 10 of the most widely read. He also received nearly 2,000 e-mails from friends and families of Soldiers, thanking him for his coverage of the Stryker Brigade, which began even before he volunteered to go overseas with the brigade.

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